

Black Canyon of the Gunnison

National Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

South Rim Hiking Trails

One of the best ways to experience the Black Canyon is to walk one of the hiking trails. Take the opportunity to listen and look for a variety of birds and animals that call the canyon their home. The ground can provide additional evidence, keep a lookout for tracks or droppings of deer, elk, bobcat, and many other animals along the way.

Our National Parks and Monuments are set aside to preserve unique areas for the enjoyment of all, even the future generations. Help preserve the Black Canyon. Please don't pick the flowers, feed or harass wildlife, or disturb natural features.

Many trails pass by steep dropoffs, so be cautious and keep a close watch on children. Think of the unseen hikers below before you throw a rock over the edge. Leashed pets are welcome on every trail except for Oak Flat Loop Trail. Bicycles are not permitted on any of the trails.

Rim Rock Nature Trail

Moderate - 1 mile round trip

As its name implies, this self-guided nature trail takes you along a relatively flat path following the rim of the canyon. You may pick up a pamphlet at the trailhead near the entrance to Campground Loop C which will describe many points of interest along the 1/2 mile trail ending at the Tomichi Point Overlook. Along this sunny route you will encounter a variety of plant life from sagebrush and Gambel oak to pinyon pine and Utah juniper. This trail allows many excellent views of the Gunnison River as well as the sheer walls of the canyon.

Oak Flat Loop Trail

Strenuous - 2 miles round trip

The Oak Flat Loop Trail (built by Student Conservation Association volunteers) offers variety to the hiker who would like to explore below the rim without taking on the challenge of hiking to the river. Parents should be aware that the trail is narrow in places and traverses some steep slopes. The trail begins near the Visitor Center. Go a short distance to the Oak Flat Loop/River Access sign and follow the trail which leads right. Descend through a grove of aspen to another signed junction. Turn left here to continue on the Oak Flat Loop. The trail meanders through a thicket of oak scrub (Gambel oak) passing near a rock outcrop, a pleasant location where you can relax and enjoy the view. The trail then heads west where it begins its ascent through a forest of Douglas fir, Aspen, and Gambel oak. On the return leg one encounters another unmarked overlook offering spectacular views downstream.

Cedar Point Nature Trail

Easy - 2/3 mile round trip

An excellent place for one to brush up on the local flora, this short, sunny, moderately sloped trail offers guideposts describing the various plants along the way. At the end are two overlooks offering breathtaking views of the river over 2,000 feet below. Also visible is the famous Painted Wall, the tallest cliff in Colorado (2,250 ft.), as well as rock islands jutting up from the depths of the canyon.

Warner Point Nature Trail

Moderate - 1.5 miles round trip

You can pick up a trail guide at the High Point Overlook or the South Rim Visitor Center. Along this trail you will find shady benches which allow you to rest among mountain mahogany, serviceberry, pinyon pine, and juniper. Looking south you can see the San Juan Mountain Range, Uncompahgre Valley, and Bostwick Park. To the north look for the West Elk Mountains, and at the end of the trail enjoy the views of the Gunnison River and the Black Canyon.

